

MATTIE'S CALL NOW IN COBB

On Tuesday, February 14, the Board of Commissioners passed a resolution making *Mattie's Call* a reality in Cobb County. The resolution provides authority for the Cobb County Police Chief, or his designee, to implement specific protocol for public safety response to incidents where persons with Alzheimer's disease or related dementia, or adults with cognitive or reasoning impairments wander from their home or residential facility. Cobb is working with its six cities to encourage them to adopt *Mattie's Call* within their jurisdictions so that Cobb will have a seamless safety net for its seniors with Alzheimer's disease and cognitively impaired adults.

Mattie's Call originated in Atlanta, on April 21, 2004, when Mrs. Mattie Moore, a 67 year old Atlanta resident, left her home to visit a neighbor across the street. She apparently became distracted or disoriented, and could not find her way back home. On December 23, 2005, her body was found in a wooded area approximately 250 yards from the door she had exited to visit her neighbor—an area that had been repeatedly searched.

One of the characteristics of Alzheimer's disease is that it produces confusion and memory loss. The individual with the disease cannot absorb and remember new information. Often, they are able to remember events from long ago, but cannot remember recent occurrences such as what they had for breakfast—whether or not they even ate breakfast.

A person with Alzheimer's disease may leave their front door to walk to the mailbox—a task they've been doing every day for their entire life—become distracted by a wave from a neighbor, and forget how to get back to their home.

When you or I get lost, or a child gets lost, we try to find a person to help us. Typically, a person with Alzheimer's disease may have a brief recognition of confusion or loss of direction, and simply begin to walk—generally not recognizing even the most familiar surroundings. Generally, they will seek to avoid being found. You may encounter them on a sidewalk, in the woods, in the middle of traffic—looking dazed and confused, or you may see them walking very rapidly, hurriedly going somewhere, but not knowing where it is that they are going.

If a caregiver stops for a loaf of bread from the local grocery store in a strip shopping mall—and is only gone 10 minutes—their passenger who has Alzheimer's disease may exit the vehicle and quickly enter another business in the mall, or begin walking, walking, walking. When the caregiver returns to the car, their companion is no-where in sight. A person with Alzheimer's disease who most of their lives has been deathly afraid of thunderstorms might now exit the vehicle in a severe thunderstorm and go into a business, enter someone else's unlocked car for shelter, or quickly walk away...and keep walking, and walking...and could even enter someone else's unlocked residence for shelter.

This resolution also establishes authority for the Cobb County Public Safety Department to work with the Alzheimer's Association through its Safe Return Program in a mutual effort to quickly find the missing individual with Alzheimer's disease or related dementia or cognitive impairment.

Parallel with this resolution, beginning in March, the Cobb County Department of Public Safety (including police, fire, and E911), the Sheriff's Office, and Cobb Senior Services will provide introductory training to employees. Refresher training will be conducted as needed.

While *Mattie's Call* began in Atlanta, Cobb County is the first county in the state to adopt the protocol, and implement the program.

Staff and volunteers from the GA Chapter of the Alzheimer's Association will serve as trainers for the on-going Safe Return training to the Public Safety Department. The Association is providing this service at no cost to the County.

The Alzheimer's Association Safe Return Program provides the caregiver a kit to help readily identify the individual with Alzheimer's disease so that their family or caregiver can be notified. It also provides the caregiver with an identification necklace so that, in the event they become incapacitated, help will immediately be provided to the individual with Alzheimer's disease. The kit typically includes a bracelet with the back engraved, indicating that the person is memory impaired, and a phone number for the finder to call, then an ID number to assist the Safe Return Program in providing the identity of and caregiver information for the wandering person. The kit also provides stickers to place in the individual's clothing, a key ring, a refrigerator magnet, and stickers for general usage. The program also provides the caregiver with steps to take now, in order to be prepared in case the individual wanders...steps such as using the kit to be prepared with a recent photo of the person with Alzheimer's—just in case they wander; knowing each day what the person is wearing—description of clothing, as well as specific steps to take should the person wander or is missing.

Cobb Senior Services has purchased several of the Safe Return kits in order to make them readily available to Cobb's residents. CSS also provides vouchers for respite care to Cobb family caregivers who have a family member with Alzheimer's disease.

The Department, in conjunction with the Alzheimer's Association, will be providing training and information to Cobb's nursing homes and personal care homes to assist them in becoming aware of Cobb's new *Mattie's Call* and Safe Return Public Safety initiatives to assist individuals with Alzheimer's disease and their families. The Department will also provide information and training to those families who have members with Alzheimer's disease who attend one of Cobb's Senior Centers.